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FM AMCONSUL KOLKATA  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2107  
INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA 2577

UNCLAS KOLKATA 000245

SENSITIVE  
SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR DRL (MORALLES)

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [IN](#)  
SUBJECT: ORISSA: COMMUNAL VIOLENCE SUBSIDES

REF: A. A) KOLKATA 239  
    B. B) KOLKATA 238  
    C. C) KOLKATA 002

1. (SBU) Summary: After a week of attacks on Christian communities in the Kandhamal district of Orissa, the violence appears to have subsided. Government of Orissa officials confirm ten fatalities and are investigating reports of one or two additional casualties. The government established relief camps for displaced person in 7 blocks in Kandhamal, housing 4084 people. According to post contacts in the Orissa Christian community, the violence in this district was widespread and Christian leaders requested protection from the Indian Army. Post plans a trip to Orissa in mid-September to confirm reports and provide a more detailed analysis of events. End Summary

2. (U) Violence sparked by the killing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP) leader Swami Laxmanananda Saraswati in Orissa continued for six days in the Kandhamal district of the state, but then tapered off on Friday, August 29. K. S. Sarangi, Deputy Secretary, Department of Home, Government, told EconFSN that the government has confirmed ten fatalities as a result of the violence and that police are investigating reports one or two additional casualties. A senior Orissa VHP contact told PolFSN that 5 of those killed were Hindus. Sarangi told EconFSN that approximately 4084 people are being housed in temporary relief camps in Kandhamal and an unknown number of people have fled into the forest areas. The extent of the property damage is not yet known, but local media report widespread attacks on Christian homes, churches and individuals. The President of the Orissa Chapter of the All India Christian Council, Reverend P.R. Parichha, informed PolFSN that the violence against Christians in Orissa is rampant. Note: According to the International Religious Freedom Report, 2.4% of the population in Orissa is Christian. Local Christian contacts speculate that 20% of the population in the district of Kandhamal is Christian. End Note.

3. (U) Sarangi reported that the curfew in Kandhamal district was relaxed for a few hours on Friday, August 29. Post has not yet confirmed the number of arrests. On August 28, Chief Minister Naveen Patnaik told the Orissa State Assembly that since August 24, the state police had made 167 arrests and filed 85 criminal cases in relation to the communal violence. According to the media, the Federal Minister of State for Home Affairs, Sri Prakash Jaiswal, visited the state capital to assess the situation but was prevented from entering the Khandamal district for security reasons.

4. (U) No one has claimed responsibility for Saraswati's murder and government contacts are not yet willing to share theories on possible suspects. Acting VHP President of Orissa, Dr. Umesh Patri, told PolFSN that Andhra Pradesh is sending a special police force known as the 'Greyhounds' to investigate Saraswati's killing. According to Patri, the 'Greyhounds' are highly trained in combating Maoist rebels. Parichha told PolFSN that Orissa Church leaders submitted a memorandum to the state government requesting Indian Army intervention. Post has been

unable to confirm media reports that the Indian national government has sent 20 companies of paramilitary and helicopters to the state.

15. (SBU) Comment: While the violence has subsided at the moment, the situation in Orissa is still volatile. ConGen is planning a trip to Orissa in the near future to meet with government officials, NGOs, religious groups and community leaders and will provide a more detailed analysis after this trip. End Comment.

PAYNE